DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 069 258 HE 003 586

TITLE	Aim and Objectives of Emerging Universities. Study Paper.
INSTITUTION	Committee of Presidents of Universities of Ontario, Toronto.
PUB DATE	24 Nov 69
NOTE	8p.; Report 70-11
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Objectives; Educational Philosophy; Geographic Location; *Higher Education; *International Education; *Universities

ABSTRACT

This report is a response to the request that the 10 established universities in Ontario undertake to support the 4 emerging universities as full members of the university community. The major role of these 4 new universities is to provide general undergraduate programs on a level of quality comparable to that of established universities in Ontario. This emphasis creates problems for all in attracting and holding scholars who expect opportunities to supervise advanced students and conduct research, although Trent and Brock Universities will find it much easier to solve these problems in a short time because of their accessible geographic locations. Lakehead and Laurentian Universities, however, operate under the double disadvantage of distance and of location in slow growth economic regions. In order to achieve the legitimate goal of equality they must overcome regional inequalities of economic development and educational opportunity and expectation. If they are to succeed, the new universities need the active support and cooperation of other universities, and recognition from the Committee on University Affairs and the provincial government that additional help channelled to them can greatly assist in achieving regional economic and social development and genuine equality of educational opportunity. (Author/HS)

ED 069258

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Study Paper

70-11

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HE00 3586

Subcommittee On Research and Planning
November 24, 1969.

STUDY PAPER PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF CPUO
by the Subcommittee on Research and Planning

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF EMERGING UNIVERSITIES

This report is a response to the request that the ten "established" universities in Ontario undertake to support the four "emerging" universities as full members of the university community. The emerging universities have, in recent years, suffered a crisis of expectations. Before committing themselves to participation in a stronger collectivity of Ontario universities, they want assurance that their legitimate interests will not be swamped by those of the older and larger institutions. More than that, they want to be able to count on the active cooperation and help of sister institutions in meeting the special problems they face and in achieving the goals that are accepted as legitimate by the university community as a whole.

It is not suprising that a crisis of expectations should now exist. New institutions are often forced by changing realities to redefine objectives. This often involves disappointment and frustration as earlier goals and ideals are compromised by serious cuts in the levels of financial support apparently guaranteed when the enterprise was launched. Fluctuations in support from governments are bound to occur as the economic and political climate dictates the total block of funds within which priorities in public spending must be arranged. A phenomenon notably associated with this process, however, is that when there is a shortage of funds with which to carry out earlier agreed goals the goals themselves, once thought excellent and worthy, are called into question.

Seven years ago when Trent, Brock, Lakehead and Laurentian were in the process of being established, the Province of Ontario was committed to the goal of providing places at universities for all students in the Province who could meet entrance requirements. The projections that were used assumed a steadily rising rate of "participation" in the age group. The assumption was also made, in the establishment of these four institutions, that a substantial number of undergraduate places should be dispersed geographically outside major metropolitan areas, in regions of the province where universities were not then located. These institutions would bring opportunity closer to many young people in the province and would contribute to equality of opportunity. Finally, these institutions were established as independent universities rather than liberal arts colleges affiliated with existing institutions. This decision implied that they were of equal status and should aspire to a quality comparable to that of existing institutions. Obviously full equality could not be achieved overnight. But, it was a legitimate goal.

Since then, it is true, some obvious caveats have appeared. The new institutions could not expect a major share in the development of specialized professional training or graduate work. Indeed the argument could be made that in these areas the total contribution of the Province's universities was already speard too thinly. However, granted that the primary contribution of the four new institutions would be in the field of general undergraduate education the original goal remains valid - quality comparable to existing institutions in the activities undertaken.

It should be noted here that although it is still the provincial goal to provide places at universities and other post-secondary institutions for all qualified applicants, a severe shortage of funds has obliged all universities to face up to a crisis of quality.

Furthermore, all universities are in the process of redefining purposes and ways and means within the traditional concepts of the universities. All universities are facing decisions about where to develop strength in the future in which they will be limited and constrained in certain ways. By the same token, all universities, not just the emerging ones, share the desire to identify positive opportunities for development that will help to define purposes and identity.

There is also the expectation that the Commission on post-secondary education will raise fundamental questions about the functions appropriate to universities and other kinds of post-secondary institutions in the post-industrial society of the 1980's and beyond. In other words, universities generally are facing the possibility of a radical redefinition of function in the not too distant future.

It is not our purpose here to do more than recognize these factors as part of the overshadowing environment. We take the Ontario university system as we find it today and in this context we attempt to define the particular problems of the four newest institutions in the immediate future. We also suggest action required by government, by the institutions themselves, and by other universities, separately and together, to meet these problems. We have chosen a deliberately narrow frame of reference because we see the practical necessity of agreement about the role of these universities in the relatively short-run if action is to flow effectively in the same short-run period.

As we have said, emerging institutions want and should have equal status with established institutions. This does not mean equality of size or identity of purpose. It does mean approval of qualitative ambitions equal to those of other institutions in areas of common function. And it implies special arrangements, financial and otherwise, necessary to make these ambitions more than idle and ultimately frustrated dreams.

Specifically, can it be assumed that, ideally, the experience of an undergraduate at any university should be academically the equivalent of any other undergraduate? This is a serious question in view of the important share of total enrolments involved. The number of students at the four emerging institutions is expected to rise significantly from 5.5% of the total in 1966-68, to almost 10% of a much larger total by 1974-75 These institutions will be responsible for almost 15% of the increase in enrolment in this seven year period. These figures reflect the major reasons for establishing these universities - to provide places for increasing numbers of students away from major metropolitan areas of the Province. We think, therefore, that it would be wrong for any one of these institutions to aspire or to be told to aspire to anything less than equivalent academic opportunities for its students in general, non-professional undergraduate education. Yet the obstacles to achieving this goal are formidable, particularly for the two northern institutions that have to contend with environmental problems which impinge directly on quality of operation.

The most important qualitative factors for any institution are of course, it's students and it's staff.

In these respects, at Brock and Trent, there are no major barriers to achievement of comparable quality with other institutions. These universities may not be provided with resources required to exceed average standards of quality but they share with established universities a developed and populated environment, with easy access to metropolitan centres, research libraries and major research facilities. They can therefore, more easily attract staff and their students are drawn from the better school systems in the Province. In contrast, both Lakehead and Laurentian have to contend with formidable environmental problems which impinge directly on quality of operation. Attracting and holding first-class staff on a permanent basis will require special steps to counteract geographic remoteness and lack of professional and other amenities such as are available in the southern and central parts of the Province. Ingenuity and money can be expected to produce reasonable results. The quality of students at Lakehead and Laurentian, however, is a more complex, long-range problem that can be overcome only with several kinds of sustained effort over many years.

There can be no doubt that student input is vital to the quality of work at any institution. Here again, Trent and Brock because of location can expect to draw better students than Lakehead and Laurentian. It is no secret that school systems in the central and southern parts of the Province have traditionally attracted larger numbers of the more experienced and better teachers. The problem of student quality is amply illustrated by the profile of a recent freshman class at Laurentian which shows less than 40% with grade 13 averages over 66% and more than 20% with averages below 60%. The second volume of the report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism documents the educational disadvantages of Ontario's French speaking population, now one-tenth of the whole. These conditions are no doubt partly responsible for the quality of student input at Laurentian.

The special problems of the two northern universities are additional to the normal problems associated with "emergence". They will not be solved by time alone. Their solution requires purposeful action - action by government, by the institutions themselves and by sister insitutuions. Specifically, action by government involves deliberate recognition of the important role of these institutions in regional development and quite possibly a program of special assistance directed toward the improvement of regional library resources and other measures aimed at lifting the quality of educational activity at all levels in the region.

Lakehead and Laurentian must themselves of course take the lead in raising the expectations of their communities and in improving the educational experience of all students at the primary and secondary levels. This, it is true, raises questions about the role of the university in contemporary society. Should the university stand apart from and above the political arena or should it become involved corporately in day to day struggles for social reform? This is not the place to engage in the general debate. But we suspect that in remote and relatively undeveloped areas universities must work actively for a series of secondary objectives that can be seen as essential to the achievement of the primary goal. In

short, if it is difficult to do first class work in a second class environment, improvement of the environment becomes in itself a major objective. The priorities given to various kinds of action aimed at this objective will depend on local circumstances and on available resources. Broad areas of activity can, however, be defined as follows:

1. Upgrading the school system and educational expectations. This means enlisting the support of teachers is a long-range program aimed at holding more students through the latter stages of secondary schooling and into university. Recent high school graduates, now at university, might become involved in such programs of extra-curricular enrichment and counselling aimed at capturing the imaginaton of students in the early stages of the school system and thus motivating them and their families towards continuing through university. Upgrading educational expectation and quality is at best a long slow process. It requires sustained and imaginative leadership. Most of all it requires the conviction and support of people living in the region. For this reason special steps should be taken to encourage potential teachers, while at university, to return to contribute to the development of the school system after getting further training outside the region. This could involve financial incentives of various kinds but more important would be the development of a visible long-range goal which would enlist the emotional commitment of the most able young people in the region.

2. Upgrading the cultural life of the community and the region. By encouraging and sponsoring artistic activities of various kinds, and involving the community, the university can do much to make the environment more attractive to potential members of faculty, to school teachers and to other professional people on whose quality so much depends. The role of Lakehead University in establishing a symphony orchestra is perhaps the most outstanding example of cultural leadership. The multiplier effects of such an enterprise on the external image of a community are immeasurable. Equally important, extra-curricular cultural opportunities are important ingredients in the quality of student experience.

3. Upgrade the economy. Both Lakehead and Laurentian are located in economic regions where population growth from 1961 to 1966 was from 50%-70% below the Provincial average. They employ substantial and growing numbers of highly qualified personnel who earn higher than average salaries. Staff and students spend large sums for goods and services. Payrolls and materials for capital construction involve large sums of money. In slow growth areas universities have relatively greater impact as desirable new industry. Their desirability is enhanced by the promise that in the near future they will pay their share of local taxes. The direct economic role of the university combined with the educational opportunity provided is responsible for relatively high levels of initial financial support from municipal governments, industry, and individuals in the locality. It is also recognized that university teachers provide a wide range of technical expertise and organizing competence which is available on a voluntary as well as a professional basis for the improvement of community life. Yet the full potential of universities in slow growth areas seems capable of much more extensive development. It is perhaps to be expected that even on an individual basis, the involvement of faculty members at Laurentian and Lakehead in the work of regional development councils seems minimal. They are fully committed to direct university responsibilities. Nevertheless,

members of faculty at some other universities are playing major roles in the work of regional development councils. Perhaps therefore, in the special circumstances of the north, a formal institutional role for the university in regional development should be considered. Such a role would, it is true, have implications for the kinds and numbers of faculty engaged and the academic programs pursued, but it ought not to be rejected out of hand on that account. This is obviously not a role which the universities could determine unilaterally. Additional resources would be required if some members of faculty were to accept formal responsibilities outside the universities. But the first step would be to proclaim a readiness to be active in this way.

4. Social reform. The north is unlikely to be in advance of the rest of the province in basic social and educational reform. Since Laurentian and to a lesser degree Lakehead are the only universities located in their respective regions, here too, there may be special roles for the universities to plan. For example, in the delivery of health care, both Lakehead and Laurentian may find it possible, in cooperation with universities already established in the health field, to develop certain kinds of specialized professional training. They might, for example, where appropriate concentrations of population exist, help to establish centres to provide medical and legal advice to the disadvantaged. Such centres would also offer opportunities for family counselling on educational opportunities and thus fit into the total effort to lift the educational level of these regions.

In addition to possible cooperation involving faculties of education and health sciences, the other universities in Ontario could contribute in other ways towards solving the problems of the emerging institutions particularly Laurentian and Lakehead. We discuss some of these:

1. Graduate work and research. There can be no quarrel with the double-barrelled concern for the quality of graduate work in Ontario which is reflected in the OCGS appraisal system or for optimum use of scarce resources as reflected in current attempts to rationalize programs so as to avoid unnecessary duplication. We agree, however, with the conclusion of the Spinks Commission that all undergraduate institutions should be able to undertake limited work at the Master's level. Examining the plans of the four emerging institutions for graduate work in the next five years, we find the number of graduate students rising to a total of roughly 500 - slightly more than 3% of the total projected for the Province. We conclude, therefore, that the ambitions of these four universities in the field of graduate study are reasonable.

At the same time, it is clear that this level of graduate activity will not satisfy the needs of all members of faculty at these institutions to be involved in graduate teaching related to their own research. Here, cooperative arrangements with established universities are essential. Once again it will be relatively easy for Trent and Brock to arrange involvement for faculty in graduate teaching elsewhere. For Lakehead and Laurentian, distance will impose more involved and expensive arrangements. Longer term systems of semi-permanent exchange or joint appointment in which a particular department is "twinned" or "buddied" with the same department at an established university may provide one answer. This kind of arrangement could best be made on a bilateral basis where the departments at the two

universities had a real interest in sharing not only staff but students as well.

Such cooperative arrangements will not be enough by themselves. Again we agree with the recommendation of the Spinks Commission that special provision be made for basic research equipment for new universities. Even though the recommended Ontario Universities Research Council has not been established, it would be possible for the Committee on University Affairs to direct the limited research funds at its disposal to support research at the northern universities as a matter of policy. At the present time all granting agencies provide support on a competitive basis. It is difficult for the newer institutions in many cases to develop sould proposals which can compete in the open market. We are therefore suggesting that, in accordance with overall regional development policy, a substantial share of Ontario's limited research funds be committed on a non-competitive basis to the two northern institutions. Suitable mechanisms for ensuring wise expenditure of such monies would of course be required. But they should be separate from those used in judging traditional competitive applications.

In some fields of study some members of faculty may prefer to pursue research interests unencumbered by graduate students. For such faculty the lack of a graduate program at an emerging university may have positive attractions provided that library and laboratory requirements are reasonably accessible. To meet the latter condition, will cost faculty at Lakehead and Laurentian much more in travel and time than it will at Brock and Trent. If special research grants made it possible to appoint post-doctoral fellows at Lakehead and Laurentian they would help to establish and maintain research activity at reasonable levels. Incidentally, we assume, without arguing the point, that an undergraduate program which does not expose the student to a substantial number of active scholars can in no way be the equal of one that does. Hence, our concern that special financial and other provisions be made which will overcome, in part, the disabilities of scholars whose teaching responsibilities must be carried out away from major library and laboratory facilities.

2. Student exchange. We have already emphasized the necessity of upgrading the school system in the northern regions in order to raise the level of student input at Lakehead and Laurentian. A more immediate contribution towards this end would be a system of incentives which would attract a number of good students from all over the Province to these universities. Special travel grants to northern students were discontinued several years ago when the POSAP came into effect. A reverse travel grant would, no doubt, be helpful but exchanges of regular students in the third year might be even more effective. Laurentian could offer special inducements to English speaking students seeking opportunities of studying and working in the French language. To have any appreciable impact, any student exchange program would need to involve substantial numbers of students. We don't underestimate the organizational effort required, although on a bilateral basis, arrangements need not be enormously complex. The long-range benefits to individual students, to the universities and to the Province could be significant. Students themselves, looking for useful activities involving emotional commitment, might be encouraged to devise their own ways of regional cross fertilization during the summers.

We have not been concerned in this report with the level of special operating grants to emerging universities or the extent to which adequate provision has been made for capital purposes. Nor have we been concerned with the question of "emergence" as such. We have observed that all universities face a crisis in the coming year if it is assumed that the quantitative goals of the Province can be met on less money than would be required to maintain present qualitative standards. In such circumstances it may be totally unreal to speak of an ideal of equality for the emerging institutions. We believe, however, that the goal is worthy even if the present means are insufficient. We have not tried to quantify the additional costs involved in the steps we have suggested as necessary to counteract the disadvantages of Laurentian and Lakehead. Suffice it to say that these costs are over and above whatever is necessary for a normal operation.

To Summarize

The major role of the four emerging institutions is to provide general undergraduate programs on a level of quality comparable to that of established universities in Ontario. This emphasis creates problems for all in attracting and holding scholars who expect opportunities to supervise advanced students and conduct research. Trent and Brock will find it much easier to solve these problems in a short time and no special measures are advocated other than the continuation of the special grants. Lakehead and Laurentian, however, operate under the double disadvantages of distance and of location in slow growth economic regions. The two northern universities are, however, potentially the most significant agents of change in their regions. In order to achieve the legitimate goal of equality they must overcome regional inequalities of economic development and educational opportunity and expectation.

If they are to succeed, all the universities need the active support and cooperation of other universities, and recognition from the Committee on University Affairs and the provincial government that additional help channelled to them can greatly assist in achieving regional economic and social development and genuine equality of educational opportunity.

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